

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 10:30 a.m., with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided, and the majority controlling the first half.

The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to engage in a colloquy for up to 20 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I understand the time is equally divided between now and 10:30. Is there sufficient time for the Republican Senator to use 20 minutes?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The time would be 18 minutes on each side.

Mr. DURBIN. Then I have no objection to how the Senators choose to use that time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

WELCOMING PRIME MINISTER NETANYAHU

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, I am here this morning to engage in a colloquy with the good Senator from South Carolina. We will be joined by the Senators from New Hampshire and Kentucky and perhaps the Senator from Arizona.

The purpose of the colloquy is to welcome Prime Minister Netanyahu this morning—who will be speaking in front of Congress—and to talk about why it is so important he is joining us today.

In a few moments we will hear remarks from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in the House Chamber and welcome him to Congress to affirm the friendship between the people of the United States and the people of Israel and to assess the threats facing our two democracies.

Actually, today's speech is not unusual. This is the 115th time that a foreign leader has addressed a joint session of Congress. This is the seventh time an Israeli Prime Minister will address a joint session of Congress. It is Prime Minister Netanyahu's third address to Congress.

It is not surprising we are hearing from the leader of our ally, Israel. Israel is a democracy in a neighborhood of authoritarian governments. Prime Minister Netanyahu speaks the language of freedom with us today. There can be no doubt of his passion on behalf of the people he represents and that makes us take his message very seriously.

So this joint session is not unusual nor surprising, but that does not mean that it is unimportant. In fact, today's speech is profoundly important. The partnership between the United States and Israel is critical for the security of the Middle East and the world. We need a strong U.S.-Israeli partnership to stop Iran from developing a nuclear

weapon. We need a strong U.S.-Israeli partnership to stand against the extremism that is ripping apart nations across the Middle East. We need a strong U.S.-Israeli partnership to demonstrate the value of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law for societies that are no longer satisfied with dictatorships.

For all of these reasons it is good to have Prime Minister Netanyahu here today. It is good to reaffirm the bond between Israelis and Americans, and it is good to join hands again with an ally to stand against tyranny and extremism. I look forward to hearing from the Prime Minister because views directly from Israel are extremely important.

Since its birth in 1948, Israel has faced one security threat after another. Israel's strength and vitality in the face of these threats are a testament to the ability of its people and its leaders to head off threats to security before they become impossible to overcome. There is no substitute for the Israeli view of security in the Middle East and the Iranian threat in particular.

So today represents an important moment to learn how Israel sees its own security and understand the next steps for the U.S.-Israeli partnership.

I now turn to my colleague from South Carolina and ask for his comments about this important speech from the Prime Minister of Israel today.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I appreciate being on the floor with the Senator from North Dakota who has been very involved in trying to secure America against a variety of threats.

I will get to the heart of the matter. Some people feel the Prime Minister should not be here at this time because in a couple weeks there will be an election in Israel. They have a parliamentary system. They do things differently—they vote for parties, not people—and they are having a real contest over there about who should be in charge and what coalitions will lead Israel.

I have a very simple comment: That is for Israelis to decide. They decide who they want to run their country. They can vote for the party or groups of people who they think best represent their view of Israel. That is their business, not mine. My business is to try to find out what is best for America when it comes to defending our Nation. That is why all of us are on the floor today.

I don't think I can adequately do my job if I don't hear from the Prime Minister of Israel, if he is willing to talk to me. Some people may be able to do that. God bless you.

If someone feels as though now is the time to boycott this speech, if they want to send a message about politics in Israel, be my guest. I am going to be at this speech to try to learn what to do regarding America and Israel concerning the nuclear threat.

Why do I think it is important for me to be there? I can't think of a better

voice to tell me what would happen in the region if we get a bad deal with the Iranians.

Israel is in the crosshairs of the Iranian ayatollahs—has been for decades—threatening to destroy the State of Israel. I want to hear from the people on the ground, Israel in particular, as to what a good deal would look like and what a bad deal would look like. I want to hear from the Prime Minister of Israel the consequences of a bad deal.

As to me, I do not trust this administration to negotiate a good deal, but maybe I am wrong; and the best way to find out is for Congress to look at the deal. If it is a good deal, I will vote for it, because the Arabs and Israelis will tell us if this is something we can live with. At the end of the day a good deal is a blessing for the world, and a bad deal is a nightmare.

(Mr. COTTON assumed the Chair.)

So to the good Senator from North Dakota, I not only welcome the Prime Minister of Israel to speak to Congress, I am looking forward to it, because I hope to learn something that would make me a better Senator regarding our own national security. The only thing I can tell the American people without any hesitation—ISIL is a threat to us, a threat to the region. They are the most barbaric terrorist organization roaming the globe today. They represent a direct threat to our homeland. But the threat they represent is a distant second to Iran having a nuclear weapon. That ought to tell you a lot about how I feel. If I can watch TV, as you do every night, and see what ISIL is doing to Christians and others throughout the region and say that is secondary to Iran, I hope that means something. It means a lot to me. Because if Iranians get a nuclear weapon, then every Arab in the region who can afford one is going to get a nuclear weapon, and we are on our way to Armageddon.

North Korea in the making is what I worry about. The same people who are negotiating this deal were negotiating the North Korean deal. Congress was absent. Now it is time for Congress to be involved and say whether this is a good deal. I have legislation with Senator CORKER and six Democrats and six Republicans asking that Congress review any deal, and I would be curious to see what the Prime Minister thinks about that.

So in summary, this would be the most important decision we make as a body, how to deal with the Iranian nuclear threat. This will be the most important issue I will deal with as a U.S. Senator, and I have been here almost 20 years. The consequence of a bad deal is an absolute nightmare.

If you were to relieve the sanctions tomorrow and gave the Iranians the money they were due under sanction relief, do you think they would build schools and hospitals or would they continue to pour money into their